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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 CONAKRY 000370

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SUBJECT: GUINEA'S NEW GOVERNMENT MEETS INITIAL DEMANDS

REF: CONAKRY 362

Classified By: Political Officer Jessica Davis Ba. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) On March 28, Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate addressed the nation with a clear message thanking all Guineans for their patience and cooperation in the creation of a "government of broad consensus". The Prime Minister listed eight priorities for his government with the consolidation of national unity, an independent justice system, and youth employment at the top of his list. A presidential decree appointed the nineteen ministers and three secretaries general that will comprise the cabinet. The initial reaction of the public is one of relief as none of the appointees are sitting ministers, which is understood as a hard-won victory over President Lansana Conte's preferences.

¶2. (C) The new cabinet shows a relatively even ethnic balance among the new ministers, who are generally apolitical with no clear connections to the majority PUP or opposition parties. There is representation from the labor unions and civil society, but a dearth of women (only three). Our interlocutors have raised some concerns - three ministers coming from positions within the Central Bank, a leader of the "old guard" to head the Ministry of Defense, and a lack of demonstrated experience in key ministries (Foreign Affairs, Interior and Security). However, the population is generally accepting of the appointments, albeit without enthusiasm, and will likely give the new ministers some time to prove themselves. It is far from certain that this new government will succeed, given the magnitude of the problems facing Guinea, the lack of financial resources, and the probability that President Conte will still try to exert his authority to the detriment of good governance. See para. 9 for proposed press guidance. End Summary.

Prime Minister Inspires and Unifies in National Address

¶3. (SBU) Guineans in all regions anxiously awaited the national news the evening of March 28 as word got out that President Lansana Conte had finally signed a decree naming a new cabinet of ministers (reftel). At 8:00 p.m. Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate went on the air. Using, apparently for the first time in Guinea, a teleprompter that allowed him to look into the camera while speaking rather than looking down at a prepared text, the Prime Minister addressed the

Guinean nation directly for the first time. (Note: This new technology was part of a USAID project to "wire" the government over the last couple of years.)

14. (SBU) In a short, focused, but broad-ranging address, the Prime Minister praised the people of Guinea, acknowledged the support of President Conte, and thanked the government, the unions, civil society, religious leaders, and political parties for their assistance. He averred that the composition of the new government represents "great hope for the future of Guinea." He expressed sympathy for the loss of lives, stating that "their blood will nourish the future." He listed the harsh realities of the "catastrophic situation" that the new government must face -- unemployment and underemployment, frustration of the youth, fiscal weakness and declining purchasing power, a lack of basic services like water, and the impunity and corruption that plagues the nation. Kouyate said that he will need the help of all Guineans in his mission to make a radical break with Guinea's past.

15. (SBU) Kouyate listed eight concrete priorities for his new government:

- consolidate national unity
- independent justice system
- youth employment
- restoration of the authority of the state
- macroeconomic stability
- mobilization of resources to secure water, electricity, and transportation
- dialogue among economic and social actors and political parties to strengthen the electoral process
- good governance

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In closing, Kouyate emphasized justice and rule of law as the foundation for change and asked for discipline on the part of all Guineans. "We must have confidence in ourselves and our national riches; without ideals we are a poor nation." He asked all Guineans to contribute suggestions, critiques, and contributions for a way forward. Kouyate thanked Conte for delegating a significant amount of his authority and assured his audience that "God is looking over Guinea." An announcer then read the presidential decree appointing the new cabinet of ministers.

Guinea's New Ministers

16. (C) The Government of the Republic of Guinea, under the authority of the Prime Minister, head of government, is composed as follows:

-- Ousmane Dore, Minister of Economy, Finance and Planning. A senior economist at the IMF's African Department and the IMF resident representative in Dakar as recently as 2006. Member of the U.N. Capital Development Fund's board of directors. Dore, who is one of the only cabinet members from the Guinean diaspora, is returning to Guinea with significant international experience in finance and banking. He is regarded as a capable technocrat to lead Guinea's efforts toward financial reform and is reportedly a proponent of Guinea's joining the CFA zone. Dore is of mixed ethnic heritage, a Malinke from the Forest. He is reportedly the nephew of opposition party leader and UPG President Jean-Marie Dore.

-- Kabele Camara, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration, and Guineans Abroad. Camara is a prominent attorney trained in Senegal who was formerly at Guinea's Court of Appeals. He has served as an attorney for controversial businessman Mamadou Sylla as well as for opposition leader Alpha Conde. Camara is the former

President of the Guinean Bar Association. He was an early member of the executive bureau of the PUP and represented the party in the first National Assembly, but several years ago Conte pushed him out of the party. Most recently, Camara was been an extremely engaged and vocal civil society leader.

He participated in the still-active civil-military committee organized last June following a USG-sponsored civil-military seminar. During the strike, he publicly critiqued President Conte in several international media outlets. Camara is married to the Embassy's FSN switchboard operator. He is of the Soussou ethnic group.

-- General Arafan Ousmane Camara, Minister of Defense. General Camara is formerly the Vice Chief of Defense Staff. He is one of the close circle of generals in control of Guinea's armed forces and was General Kerfalla Camara's deputy. He is the only officer who was promoted from Major to General in less than five years and some believe that he was personally groomed by Conte as a possible successor. Camara was the commanding officer in the Forest Region during the 2000-2001 rebel attacks. Many military officers, particularly the younger ones, do not support Camara because they see him as highly corrupt. He was trained in Russia. He is a Malinke from Faranah.

-- Mamadou Beau Keita, Minister of the Interior and Security. Keita was formerly the Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Security and has been a part of the security apparatus for his entire career. He is considered non-corrupt and a "straight talker" by other staff at the ministry and has crossed swords with those in powerful positions because he has refused to "play the game." However, Keita has little experience in the work that will be required of him in managing this powerful ministry, which will cover not only internal security, but also territorial administration and the electoral process. Keita holds a doctorate in criminology. Born in 1957, he is a Malinke from Kouroussa, the Prime Minister's hometown.

-- Paulette Kourouma, Minister of Justice and Human Rights. Kourouma, a well-respected lawyer, was formerly the President of the Economic Chamber at the Court of Appeals in Conakry. She has also served as President of the Court of Appeals in Kankan and Conakry. She studied in Guinea and is a Guerze from the Forest region.

-- Saidou Diallo, Minister of Economic and Financial

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Oversight, Ethics and Transparency. Formerly Director General of the Guinean National Social Security system. Diallo is a former ambassador to Nigeria and Canada. He was the director of the coordination of state-owned export enterprises under Sekou Toure. He is an economist by training and was Vice Governor of the Central Bank during the 1980s. Diallo was one of the names put forward by unions as a candidate for Prime Minister.

-- Ahmed Kante, Minister of Mines and Geology. Kante was in charge of coordinating operations of the various regional branches of the Central Bank. Kante is half Peuhl/half Malinke. He comes from Labe.

-- Goumou Gnanga Komata, Minister of Energy and Water. Formerly Counselor to the Governor at the Central Bank. He is a Guerze from the Forest region.

-- Mamoudou Camara, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, the Environment and Forestry Affairs. Camara was formerly the Vice Director at the Ministry of Agriculture. He was the Deputy Director of the Agricultural Research Institute. He went to school in Guinea and did advanced studies in Cuba. Camara has participated in an Embassy seminar on commercial issues. He is married to a U.S. citizen and is a Soussou from Dubreka, Conte's home region.

-- Mohammed Youla, Minister of Fishing and Aquaculture. Youla was the former National Director of the Budget and Chair of the Budgetary Peer Review Committee at the Ministry of Economy and Finance. He has worked with the U.S. Treasury Advisor. Ministry staff do not regard him highly with respect to his technical competencies, and some interlocutors suggest he is corrupt and known for embezzling funds. He is a Soussou from Forecariah.

-- Mamady Traore, Minister of Commerce, Industry, Tourism and Artisanal Industries. Officially listed as the former Guinean ambassador to Mali, Traore was appointed as ambassador last December, but never left Guinea to assume this position. Traore has served as Political Counselor for the last two Ministers of Foreign Affairs. He served as Guinea's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York when Guinea was a member of the Security Council. He led the Guinean government's preparations for the first U.S.-Guinea bilateral consultations in March 2006 and is one of our key interlocutors at MFA. Traore is a Malinke from Koroussa, the Prime Minister's hometown.

-- Thierno Oumar Bah, Minister of Public Works, Urban Planning and Housing. Bah worked for the NGO Shelter Africa.

-- Boubacar Sow, Minister of Transportation. Sow was formerly the Secretary General at the Ministry of Transportation. He is not reported to be a close collaborator to former Minister of Transportation Keira. Sow is a Peuhl from Mamou.

-- Justin Morel, Jr., Minister of Communication and New Information Technologies. Formerly worked with UNICEF in Guinea and then was promoted to international service, based in DRC. Editor of on-line news magazine justinmoreljunior.net. Morel served as the first director of the state-owned Guinean Radio and Television, but was fired for reportedly making recordings of performing artists and selling them without compensating the artists. Morel participated in two International Visitor programs in the 1980s. He is a Soussou.

-- Ousmane Souare, Minister of Education and Scientific Research. Souare was formerly the Director of Scientific Research at the Ministry of Higher Education. A labor union leader, member of USTG and a member of the Executive Bureau of the union coalition, Souare has participated in several Embassy-sponsored programs including a recent training on negotiation skills and conflict resolution. He was a key contact during all three general strikes. Souare is a close family relative to the former Minister of State for Education Ahmed Tidiane Souare. He is a Peuhl from the town of Mali in northern Guinea.

-- Baidy Aribot, Minister of Youth, Culture and Sports. Currently the Director of Currency Exchange at the Central Bank. Aribot has a relaxed view on the misappropriation of funds and acknowledged that theft is rampant at the Central Bank (Conakry 299). Aribot is Western-educated and is reportedly working on an executive training program in the

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United States. He is an avid student of the U.S. civil rights movement and has been a close contact of the Embassy. Aribot is a Soussou from Boffa.

-- Maimouna Bah Sangare, Minister of Public Health. Madame Sangare was formerly Director of Ignace Deen Hospital, the better equipped (but still substandard) of Conakry's public hospitals. Sangare was instrumental in obtaining resources and foreign assistance for the hospital. She is highly regarded by most Guineans and has access to President Conte through his close coterie. Sangare studied in Algeria and is a Peuhl from Pita.

-- Tete Nabe, Minister of Social, Women's and Children's

Affairs. Madame Nabe is a corporate leader and an influential women's leader dating back to the First Republic.

Nabe served as the Director General of Bonagui, the largest bottling company in Guinea, for at least 10 years. She built the company from scratch, securing key international partnerships with Coca-Cola and other international companies. She was ousted from the company in the 1990s for being too politically involved. She is a Malinke from Kankan.

-- Amadou Diallo, Minister of Labor, Civil Service, and Administrative Reform. Diallo was formerly National Director of Road Maintenance. He is the number two at CNTG, Guinea's largest labor union, and a member of the executive bureau of the labor coalition. He is an electro-mechanical engineer by training and is a Peuhl from Boffa.

-- Mamady Samb Soumah, Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic. Soumah was formerly in the National Office of Professional Training. Soumah will now manage the daily administration of the Presidency. He is a Soussou.

-- Oury Bailo Bah, Secretary General of the Government. This is the only cabinet position whose incumbent was not replaced. Bah has been in this behind-the-scenes staff position for many years. His retention is not expected to raise public concern.

-- Mahmoud Cherif Nabaniou, Secretary General of Religious Affairs. Cherif was formerly Guinea's ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He is from the Soussou ethnic group.

Guineans Relieved and Will Now Wait and See

17. (C) The appointment of a new government has allowed the country to breath a sigh of relief. Prime Minister Kouyate's message resonated positively with the public; he deftly situated the appointments as just one component of the national effort that will be necessary to secure real change.

The ministerial roster has been met with a cautiously positive response. Even opposition leader Sidya Toure told RFI that he was largely satisfied. The cabinet has a relative ethnic balance (six Soussou, seven Peuhl, seven Malinke, and two Forestier -- both Guerze). Of concern to some, many of the new appointees have held prior senior government staff positions, although none were ministers, there are only three women named, and several incoming ministers lack significant experience.

Comment

18. (C) Guineans are reading the new government make-up as a signal that Prime Minister Kouyate was able to manage his "Conte problem": he succeeded in replacing the entire team, even those Conte was initially determined to keep. That gives early hope that the Prime Minister will continue as he has begun and make progress in treating Guinea's ills. Guineans will now give him time -- but not very much time -- to begin meeting the rest of their demands and needs. It is far from certain that this new government will succeed, given the magnitude of the problems facing Guinea, the lack of financial resources, and the probability that President Conte will still try to exert his authority to the detriment of good governance.

Proposed Press Guidance

19. (SBU) We suggest any press commentary be along the

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following lines:

The United States notes with satisfaction the appointment on March 28 of a new government of broad consensus in Guinea. We salute Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate's intention to include in his priorities such key objectives as an independent justice system, macroeconomic stability, political dialogue and good governance. We look forward to working with him and his new team as they translate their strategy for a democratic, accountable and economically healthy Guinea into action.

MCDONALD